A Church Member
Hebrews 10:22-25

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Many people want Jesus, but they’re not _______ about the church. Some have _______ organized religion and others have started worshipping at _______. What does the Lord say about church membership? Is it the will of God?

Many people today say, “Jesus, _______; but the church, ______.” They want to be Christians but not _________ of any “organized religion.” Others have decided to become Christians “at large” or to establish small “house churches”; they don’t want to be _______ of the organized church with elders and deacons that’s mentioned in the New Testament. But, can a Christian _________ God and live apart from the church? Is attending church and being a church member _________? Or can a person just live a good life without the church and without the association of brothers and sisters? Should Christians be church members?

I’m told that eighty percent of Americans _________ that you can be a good Christian and yet not be a member of any church. This seems odd to me since the New Testament is _______ of references to the church. People forget the church is made up of the called-out people of God who are _________ by the blood of Jesus and who are devoted to following Him. The church is not some man’s idea but it’s God’s. If you could be a member of the church of Christ, the church that He built, and if you believe and practice what the Lord teaches, wouldn’t you _________ to be a part of that church? The good news is that you _________ be a member of the Lord’s church.

Our reading today comes from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 22 to 25.

In trying to understand the _________ of the church in God’s plan and scheme of things, the first thing that we must do is see the connection between Christ himself and His church. There are a number of passages that show such a _________ relationship that one can hardly think of Christ and not also think about His church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus responded to Peter’s confession that He was the Christ, the _______ of the Living God, and He said “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock (that is, the confession) I will _________ my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The church itself is built upon the _________ that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. Jesus built His church, and it _________ to Him!

In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own _________. “When I think of the purchase price that Jesus paid for the church, I can only conclude that the church must have been very, very _________ to Him. People only ________ for the things that are most important in their lives. If the church were that important to Christ, it ought to be that important to those who _________ the Lord and want to follow in His steps. The church is the _________ thing mentioned in Scripture that Jesus purchased with His blood. For this reason, we cannot please God and ________ as if the church were optional.
Paul said that the church is so closely related to Christ that it may be called his ________, suggesting that the church is how Jesus Christ is working in the world today. Paul said, “And He put all things in subjection under His (that is, Jesus’) feet, and gave Him as ________ over all things to the church, which is His ______, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). The head and the body are so closely connected, interconnected, that they should ________ be divided. Christ without the church is like a head without its body. Those who want Christ but ________ the church need to think through their theology. The church was Christ’s idea.

Read what Paul said in Ephesians 5:25-27. Christ loves the church with the same fervor that a husband loves his wife. When people criticize and slander the church, Jesus must feel the ________. How would you feel if people said ugly things about your family? Jesus thinks of every member of His church as His ________.

The apostle Paul also reminds us that Jesus is “the ________ of the church” and “the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). The church is not the Savior, but the “saved.” Christ is the Savior of the church. In Acts 2:47, we learn that the Lord ________ the “saved” to His church. If you are saved, the Lord has added you to His church, you’re a church ________. If you’re not in the church, then (Biblically speaking) you’re not ________ the saved. The church is not an optional thing that you can take or leave at your will. It’s the Lord’s ________ body of people whom He has saved, whom He loves, and whom He purchased with His own blood.

It is for this reason that Paul said, “For no man can lay a ________ other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). People need to be ________ with what the Lord has founded. You cannot substitute something else in its place. You can’t build your own spirituality, your own arrangement, or your own church and expect to ________ the Lord Jesus. Jesus, the Lord said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be ________” (Matthew 15:13). Man-made religion doesn’t work with God. Some think they can reinvent the church, but it may end up back-firing on them. The Lord’s foundation is the ________ foundation.

We ask, “What was the church like in the New Testament?” The word “church” refers to an assembly, a congregation that has been called together for a specific ________. After Paul had established several congregations on his first missionary journey, he ________ to those congregations, strengthening and encouraging them. Acts 14:23 says, “When they had appointed elders for them in every church (congregation), having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Later, Paul wrote “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (that is, bishops and elders) and deacons” (Philippians 1:1).

These were organized churches with established ________. They were visible, recognizable congregations, meeting at set times, and in set locations. Paul mentions many of the ________ of the church at Philippi or Rome or Corinth by name. Yes, sometimes churches met in some family’s ________. But in those days a large house could hold a congregation. In some cases, congregations met outside or in caves. You have to remember that the church was ________ persecuted and considered illegal. The earliest church buildings date about 250 AD. Although they could not openly show themselves, they were ________ organized.
When the church of the New Testament was faced with a __________, they brought it to the apostles and later to the elders of each congregation. They didn’t get _______ and start their own churches with their own doctrines and their own ways. The Hebrew writer gave instructions to members of churches, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your _______ as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17). God wants us to fulfill His _______ and purpose for His church, not reinvent the church with our _______ ideas and designs. David said, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house (temple) of the LORD’” (Psalm 122:1). We too ought to be glad when we _______ today with the household of God, that is, the church. The church is God’s temple today according to 1 Corinthians 3:16. Some of my most treasured moments have been spent with God’s people worshiping and serving. My dearest friends are fellow _______ of the church. They’ve helped me and blessed me richly through the years. I look forward to being with my spiritual family at church each Lord’s Day. I’m glad when they say, Let us go to church.

The notion that we can “be the church” but not be a part of any local congregation is a human _______. God’s people assemble with one another. The Hebrew writer said, “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our _______ assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25). In the New Testament, when a Christian _______ assembling with the church, he was falling away from God. He was _______ the faith. He was hurting himself and hurting the church by returning to the _______.

Solomon said, “Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). People in the church make _______ _______ stronger, better, and more faithful and committed. Each Christian needs the _______ of love and faith that his brothers and sisters give him. Each Christian needs to so _______ and so _______ that he provides an example of commitment to the cause of Christ to those surrounding him. Saying, “Well, I love Christ, but I won’t go to church,” sends a _______ signal. It says I love God, but I will choose which commands I will _______ and which I will not. Such a person isn’t really obeying God but he’s obeying himself and obeying his own _______. Solomon said, “Two are _______ than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them ________, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they will keep ________, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can _________ him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). God knew that his people needed the _______ and love that each one could give the other to grow and to remain strong in the faith. Two are better than one because they have each other.

Where would we be _______ Bible teachers and without godly examples? In the early church, God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13). God ________ that His people
needed training and equipping to do the _______ that He called them to do: and that is to take the ________ to the world, to _______ up the church, and to render _______ to the needy.

Through the years, the church has been so good to Jackie and me. Over thirty years ago, when our four children were small, my lovely wife Jackie had to be in the hospital for several days with a back problem. We had no physical family within 500 miles at that time. The church was our _________. The church we attended in Mississippi helped us with food and cleaned our house. An older lady, Mrs. Edwards, watched our children when we had to go to the doctor. The hardest year of our lives was made better by the goodness of people who loved and cared for us. We can never forget that we had loved ones who helped us when we needed it.

When Katrina destroyed much of Louisiana and Mississippi, churches all over middle Tennessee and Kentucky raised _______ to send to their brethren affected by the hurricane. I watched truck after truck _________ with supplies and food and water go to churches where the needed items were distributed. No red tape, just brothers and sisters _________ brothers and sisters. One church of 100 members in Gonzales, Louisiana, fed 300-500 people every day for weeks. Churches gave millions of dollars to _________ this disaster. They didn’t get much publicity, but the people there knew where to go to get help. They got it from God’s ________, the church. I’m so grateful for what the church is doing all over everywhere, and what a difference it makes in the ________ of people. We need the church for good examples; we need the church for the teaching they give; and we need the church for the help they can give when we need help.

Someone says, “Well Phil, you just don’t understand. We had a _______ experience at church and won’t be going back.” Many times the problem is not with the _________ church but with an individual or two who hasn’t acted as he should. The Bible teaches that when a fellow Christian _________ against you that you’re to go to that person privately and talk to him, trying to restore the relationship (Matthew 18:15). Many times people, rather than following the instructions of the Lord, simply just quit and _________ themselves from the godly people that they need in their lives. Don’t quit the church over some _________ brother or sister. Talk to that person and work it out, and draw close to Jesus when you do it.

I became a Christian because of Jesus. He is my Lord and Savior. I want to _______ with Him forever. My pride is not as important as going to heaven. I won’t let anything or anyone come _________ my God and me. I will always have to deal with rude, selfish, and immature people; but if the Lord was gracious enough to _________ me of my many sins, I can be gracious enough to forgive those who sin against me. I don’t want to risk my soul by refusing to forgive a brother or sister in the church. I’d rather forgive and be forgiven than to die lost.

There’s no greater honor and no greater blessing than to be a _______ of God. You can be one today, if you will. The Lord opens His heart and His hands, reaching for you with the ________. If you’ll accept the gospel—that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and arose on the third day—and by _________ in Him, _________ of your sins, _________ His name before others, and by being baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins, then you too can be a child of God. You can be His child, an heir of eternal life. Won’t you do that today?